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AUTHOR	Ioannidou, Elena, Comp.
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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography presents studies that address the interplay of power and ideology in language policy. The studies assert that all the conflicts and oppositions between groups, disguised as either language, ethnic, or social movements, have the same basic aim: the quest for power and inclusiveness in the mechanisms of the state. The first part presents books that address the concept of language in relation to politics and power from a wider perspective. The second part focuses on more specific examples of language planning and language policy. The third part deals with the concept of prescriptivism in language from two different perspectives: language standardization and language purism. The last part presents some case studies from Pakistan, Greece, and Japan to show how the issues of linguistic policy, power, and ideology are conceptualized and implemented in specific contexts internationally. (SM)

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Brief background notes on contemporary issues, with the aim of encouraging more informed discussion

"THE BATTLEFIELD OF LANGUAGE: THE INTERPLAY OF POWER AND IDEOLOGY IN LANGUAGE POLICY"

Compiled by Elena Ioannidou

Introduction

Language is a field where conflicts, oppositions and antagonisms are very common. Many scholars have characterised the language field as a war since there are so many different parties and aspects of society that are involved in it. Language has been associated with power and antagonisms ever since the tower of Babel was not built. It has also been directly connected to ideology and especially to the concepts of identity and ethnicity. All over the world we experience the intense, and sometimes violent struggles of ethnic or other groups to establish their language as an official or a recognised language. Why? Why is there this immense and unquestionable need for a language to be recognised, established and cultivated? What is it that makes language such an important aspect of social life and leads people to riot, protest and sometimes kill in the name of it?

Language is the basic tool for communication. However, language has been and will continue to be much more than that. For many people (especially in the late 18th and 19th centuries) language has been associated with the concept of nation; it has been the basic marker of ethnicity, of culture: the indicator of the origin of the person, of his or her culture and therefore of its essence. Struggling therefore to establish language has been identical with struggling to establish ethnic and cultural survival. This seems fair enough - but not for everyone though.

Many scholars (Calvet,1996; Crowley,1989; Rahman,1996; Schiffman, 1997; Thomas, 1991; Tollefson,1991) argue that the struggle for language has been a disguised struggle for power. In other words, establishing your own language means gaining more rights and therefore access to the mechanisms of the state that distribute power to those who are in the system (Foucault, 1970)[1]. Therefore, the actual cultural and linguistic struggle led by many groups embeds a wider quest for more power.

[1] Foucault, M. (1970) *The order of discourse.* Paris: Gallimard.

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Language, power and identity are all connected in multiple ways to each other. It would be extremely limited to try and built up a model of the interaction of these three concepts since language is, as human nature and society both are, an extremely complex and situation/context-bound phenomenon. Language is embedded in every aspect of social life. It can be a medium for unification or separation of people. It can be a carrier or a marker of identity and culture - but it can also be an indicator of modernity and power. These all, however, interact and negotiate with each other.

Language can be used to distribute power to certain groups through language policy and planning. Similarly, the empowered groups can use language to legitimise and strengthen their social position. Added to that, groups may consider their language an important marker of their identity and therefore struggle for its (and their) survival and recognition. There is a continuous interplay between power and identity in relation to language. In this document I will be presenting the work of scholars who argue that all the conflicts and oppositions between groups, disguised as either language, ethnic or social movements, have the same basic aim: the quest for power, their inclusiveness in the mechanisms of the state, in the system.

Is that realistically and completely true? The existence of many cases of groups that denied the recognised system, refused to abandon their own language even though it was stigmatised and it excluded them from gaining any power is an unquestionable fact. The establishment of social networks that are characterised by solidarity and a sense of belonging is the counter balance of the theory that suggests that all groups aim at gaining power only. The concepts of identity, of belonging and of commonality are still crucial in the cases of language, ethnicity and social class. However, the situation is still very complex. Are these people really uninterested in the share of power? Is it that since they have been already excluded from the power-networks there is nothing left to do? Would they be willing to sacrifice this sense of solidarity and give up their language as an exchange to social mobility and power? This is not an easily answered question. Is power the one and only objective of groups (disguised as ethnic revival, nationalism, linguistic rights, social class war)? Or is the sense of solidarity and belonging still a crucial and determinant factor for the groups? One thing for sure is that language plays a central role in this antinomy. Either as a tool for gaining power or as a means for preservation of identity; as a mirror where all social and political conflicts are reflected, language remains central to society and people and carries ideologies (modern or historical) indicating the ways in which groups wish to define themselves.

The following bibliography presents selected studies that address the above issues from different perspectives. The bibliography is divided into four parts. The first part presents books that address the concept of

language in relation to politics and power from a wider perspective. The second part presents more specific examples of language planning and language policy. The third part deals with the concept of prescriptivism in language from two different perspectives, language standardisation and language purism. Finally, the last part presents some case studies from specific countries (Pakistan, Greece, Japan) to show how the issues of linguistic policy , power and ideology are conceptualised and implemented in particular contexts of the world.

I. LANGUAGE AND POLITICS

Crowley, T. (1989) *The Politics of Discourse.* London: Macmillan.

This book investigates the social and political nature of language focusing specifically on the course of the English language from the middle of the last century until today. Based on the theories of Bakhtin, Foucault and Volosinov Crowley argues that language and power are directly linked, that language reflects other social concepts and that history and language have a dialectical relationship. Travelling back in time he unravels the strong rhetoric around the English "proper" language and indicates that the English language in Britain has always been connected with either nationalism, social unity or religion. One of his main focuses is the concept *standard English* (written and spoken), both as an ideological and a policy-making term. The standard written language was traced as a historical phenomenon but the standard spoken language was viewed by the majority of scholars as a social value-laden phenomenon that distinguished people according to the way they spoke. Crowley insists that the quest for standard in Britain, either in the name of national unification or literary tradition, was another form of one group dominance over the other. Education became the basic tool for the transfer and legitimisation of this authority. All the changes in language policies that took place, were rooted in other social or political issues. The "barbarians" were excluded from the social system but as time went by and they became more and more organised they started posing a threat to the dominant groups; they, then, were included in the social system, they were taught the "proper" way of speaking, they became more "civilised" and certainly more controllable.

Crowley rejects all the arguments for superiority of one form of the language over the other and insists that these kinds of evaluations have been filled with cultural and social presuppositions. His overall aim has been to show how language becomes the vehicle for a crusade for specific types of contemporary values and he bitterly admits that there has been, in contemporary Britain, a return to "Victorian values" (p.270) as far as language and education are concerned.

Calvet, J. L. (1998) *Language Wars and Linguistic Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The title of this book indicates the views the author adopts concerning language and society. Throughout the book he insists on the deeper relationship between language and social values and constantly argues that the world has been multilingual from the beginning and ever since people used their language and identity to gain power. Language war is at its deeper aspects a power war that reflects the conflicts and antagonisms that take place between different groups in the society. The book is divided into three parts each describing different aspects of the war of languages: the origins of the conflict (Part One), the battlefield (Part Two) and among the administrators (Part Three).

In the very interesting part one he describes how different groups, from the ancient times, tried to impose their language as the superior one, either through religious means (Islam) or cultural (Ancient Greeks, European colonialism). This linguistic war has been, however, the fight for something else, economic, cultural, religious or military imposition of one group over the other.

In part two he provides examples from the battlefield of the linguistic war. Lingua francas against vernaculars, international languages against lingua francas, dead and alive languages, wider communication and economic benefits against solidarity and group identity.

In the last part he is concerned with language planning (choices about language) and language policy (implementation of the choices). He describes some case studies (China, India, Guinea, Turkey, Norway and France) to argue that language is inseparable from politics and that behind every language policy lie other wider political, ethnic, economical or cultural objectives. He also refers to the war of writing and the war of lexis as more detailed and explicit aspects of the language war.

Overall there is a widespread conviction in the book that language changes as the world changes and that the history of language is one side of the history of the society. Language conflicts speak to us of social conflicts and behind language wars we can detect another kind of power war.

II. THE POWER OF LANGUAGE PLANNING

Tollefson, J. (1991) *Planning Language, Planning Inequality*. London: Longman.

In this book Tollefson makes a strong statement about the power-nature of language through language planning. He argues that power, state and ideology are interlinked and that they are all projected onto language planning, which of course, promotes the language varieties of those in power. Tollefson investigated the two approaches of the ideological foundations of language planning research, the Neo-classical approach and Historical-structural approach. Neo-classical is the

approach that views the individual as the key for understanding social systems and therefore fails to confront issues of language relations and group relations. On the other hand, the Historical-structural approach contextualises policies and plans in their history and emphasises the constraints on individual decision making. This approach considers language planning a macro-social process and not as an area of applied studies as the neo-classical approach does.

Tollefson admits that most contemporary language planning is based on the neo-classical approach and therefore fails to remove the powerful linguistic barriers for social equality. Language planning plays an important role in the structuring of power and inequality in society since the state uses language planning to control labour, economy and the social structure of society. Education is a process of legitimisation of this inequality making language planning seems like a natural and not an imposed process. "Language policy-planning means the institutionalisation of language as a basis for distinctions among social groups" (p.16). However, he concludes, achieving language rights demands struggle so there is a need to fight and resist. Language planning may reflect relationships of power but it can also be used to transform them and introduce a new social and linguistic order.

Schiffman, H. (1996) *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy.* London: Longman.

In this study Schiffman stresses the fact that language policy is ultimately grounded in linguistic culture and he examines three national situations, France, India and USA where problems of language policy and culture have been faced. Throughout this book he argues that language policy is primarily a social construct and he refers to the term linguistic culture to describe the wider context in which language and society interact. Language itself is a cultural construct but this does not imply that languages can be easily changed or deconstructed. Schiffman identifies many problems in the discussions and the actual practice of the concepts of language, language planning and language policy. His basic viewpoint is that language policies are vaguely defined and that there are often two kinds of policies, the *overt* and the *covert*. Most of the studies ignore the covert aspect of language policy and therefore fail to know what actually "happens on the ground".

The three national case studies exhibit the above and indicate that what is formally exposed through legal status is often different from what occurs daily and constantly. France adopts an autocratic-centrist language policy aiming at unilingualism and uniformity; it is simply the case of a multilingual state that refuses to recognise that. India, on the other hand, represents the post-colonial striving of new nations; it adopts a multilingual accommodationist policy based on a foreign model (USSR) that had failed in its own country. However, India manages to survive as a multilingual state and this is due to its long tradition and acknowledgement of multilingualism. Finally, the US case stands in between the two previous cases: a language policy that seems tolerant of linguistic diversity but which, when it comes to the actual

implementation of linguistic rights, is not. Overall, Schiffman stresses that every language policy is culture-specific and that we need to study this linguistic culture in order to understand what is really going on in language policy and in language relations.

III. PRESCRIPTION IN LANGUAGE: POWER OR UNIFICATION?

Milroy, L. and Milroy, J. (1991) *Authority in Language: Investigating Issues of Prescription and Standardisation.* London: Routledge, second edition.

In this book Milroy and Milroy explore the historical and cultural background of the notions of "correctness" and prescriptivism in language. Focusing on the case of the English language in Britain, they describe the "complaint" tradition that dominated the linguistic scenery of the 18th century and onwards. This complaint tradition consisted of a rhetoric of complaints about the aesthetics, the correctness and the proper use of the English language. It mainly targeted the working-class variety and stigmatised it as vulgar and rude. This tradition created the standard ideology that encouraged prescription in language and intolerance towards the "non-standard" varieties. What the authors indicate, however, is that this standard ideology was not rooted in linguistic factors but in social comparisons and social relationships.

Although the prescriptive ideology has created language attitudes and language standards it failed to unify the spoken language. Most of the sub-standard and often stigmatised varieties have been alive and passionately used by their speakers. This is the result of the creation of social networks that are identity-oriented, disregard the standard spoken speech and use their own variety as a marker of solidarity and a sense of belonging.

Moreover they indicate that the differences between written and spoken channels along with the notion of communicative competence make it even more difficult to prescribe uniformity in the spoken language and to assess what is "correct" or not in a language.

Thomas, G. (1991) *Linguistic Purism.* London: Longman.

This is an in-depth and multi-perspective study of the concept of linguistic purism. *Linguistic purism*, according to Thomas, is the manifestation of a desire of a group of people, mainly from the intellectual elite, to preserve a language, or rid it of undesirable elements. As in all the other language movements, purism is a value-laden phenomenon closely linked to cultural, social, ethnic and political values. Thomas identifies the lack of an adequate theory about purism that is mostly due to the fact that purism had been accompanied by subjectivity, diffuseness and other non-rational motivations. Having that as a standpoint he explores all the different attempts made by scholars to define or study purism and concludes that there have been problems in defining purity since it has always been a value-laden phenomenon.

He goes on to unravel and explore the notion of purism offering an explicit theoretical framework about it: first investigating the motivation of purism, indicating that there are both rational (instrumental, ethical) and non-rational (affective, traditional) arguments but the latter are the ones that govern the theorising in linguistic purism. Thomas also examines the linguistic levels that are affected by purism and argues that the lexical and semantic level are the ones that are targeted the most by the purists (loan-words, neologisms, calques/ indigenised loan-words, dialectalisms, etc.). Added to that he describes the purification process (very close to the standardisation process) and examines the role individuals, groups and language academies play in promoting purist language reforms. He argues that language purism rarely begins as a mass phenomenon; rather it is slowly incorporated as such. Language variation, language contact and especially language standardisation are situations in which purism rises. However, there are plenty of extra-linguistic factors that give rise to purism, such as nationalism, literary and aesthetic movements.

The most striking effects of purism (depending on its intensity and its motivation) are its impact on the relations between language varieties and on the creation of linguistic attitudes and linguistic behaviour. However, purism is a rather complex phenomenon with a strong ideological component and in order to evaluate it and assess it we first have to study it thoroughly. Overall Thomas provides an account of the concept of purism that is directly related to issues of language planning-policy, language use and language attitudes.

IV. SOME CASE STUDIES

Rahman, T. (1996) *Language and Politics in Pakistan.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book offers an excellent account of the conflict between different ethnic and linguistic groups (*identity*) and their battle to gain *power*. In other words we can see through specific examples how language is manipulated in the game of power and identity. Rahman describes the different language movements that emerged in Pakistan, each having its own unique characteristics but all sharing the struggle for coming closer to the mechanisms of the state and therefore gaining more power and prestige.

The creation of the state of Pakistan has been itself the result of a language and identity conflict (Urdu *vs* Hindi). Pakistan had been a part of British India: a multiethnic state with different national groups under colonial rule for many years. Rahman describes the way in which many of the identities of these groups were altered or re-defined by abandoning their native language (eg the Punjabi movement) in the name of power and prestige. He also shows how other groups managed to preserve their language and gained official recognition by stressing their identity and opposing the ruling elite. In all cases, however, religion and language became the bases for the construction of

identities. Rahman provides an explicit account of how the colonial policy influenced each movement in order to promote its own interest.

Language conflicts were multiple and operating at different levels: the indigenous vernaculars against the official Urdu (the language of the religion); all the varieties against the colonial English; the war among the vernaculars for official recognition and power; and finally the war between English, representing modernity and adopted by the westernised elite, and Urdu, representing tradition and opposition to colonialism. There are also short references about the threat posed by Hindi, in other words the political threat posed by the neighbouring India itself.

All the language movements (Pashto, Balochi, Sindhi, Bengali, Siraiki, Punjabi) were viewed by the central government as a conspiracy (either by India or by communism) to destroy the "unification" of the state. What Rahman's account shows is that no ethnic or language group will remain passive when it is being exploited. On the other hand groups may deny their own language when they receive power and access to the mechanisms of the state in return.

Frangoudaki, A. (1992) "Diglossia and the present language situation in Greece: a sociolinguistic approach to the interpretation of diglossia and some hypotheses on today's linguistic reality" *Language In Society, 21* (3) pp 365-381.

In this article Frangoudaki describes the political and social ideology that lay behind the language conflict between two varieties in Greece, *Katharevousa* and *Demotiki*. She extends that theorising to the current rhetoric around the Greek language and argues that right up to today the Greek language is closely bound to the concept of identity and power.

Both *Katharevousa* and *Demotiki* were connected with political and ideological standpoints. *Katharevousa*, the formal language until 1976 was mostly a written, manufactured code. It was associated however with the ruling-class rhetoric and was used, at least until the 1930s as a way of distinguishing the educated from the illiterate majority. *Demotiki* on the other hand was the carrier of economic and social progress, of industrialisation and of freedom of speech. *Demotiki* has been the codified and normalised form of the natural language spoken by all the Greeks. Until the first world war *Katharevousa* represented the official, high variety. During the interwar period and increasingly after the civil war *Katharevousa* became associated exclusively with authoritarian politics and anti-liberal values. In other words it lost its social utility and the function of high variety. On the other hand *Demotiki* became the variety of the freedom of will, of modernity. Both varieties were directly connected to political standpoints. In 1976, after the seven year regime of the military junta, the language reform abolished *Katharevousa* and established *Demotiki* as the standard and official variety.

However, language conflicts have not ceased in Greece. From the beginning of the 1980s until today a language movement led by a few

intellectuals and prestigious individuals (all belonging to the intellectual elite) developed the "language decline theory" that presented *Demotiki* as an impoverished language and sought for unity in the Greek language (no boundaries between *Katharevousa*, *Demotiki* and ancient Greek). This theory has wider persuasiveness and succeeded in convincing many people that the Greek language is poor and defective. Frangoudaki argues that this linguistic theory is routed in deeper ideological and social fears and it represents an identity crisis of a segment of the Greek population. The traditional society of Greece with its glorious past now faces European integration. This theory, according to Frangoudaki, is a disguised fear for the future of the Greek society and expresses feelings of superiority since it denies the present language variety and seeks the glory of the ancient world through the ancient variety of Greek

Matsumori, A. (1995) "Ryukuan: Past, Present and Future" *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 16* (1-2) pp 19-45.

In this article the writer describes the decline of Ryukuan, a group of vernacular languages spoken in the southern islands of the Japanese archipelago. These vernaculars have been spoken for centuries by the people of the islands and were important sources for dialectology and typology. However, at the beginning of this century a dramatic decline of the Ryukuan language and culture occurred. This decline was mainly due to the vast socio-economic changes that took place in the islands and also due to the surge of nationalism.

The history of the islands reveals that the Japanese attempted to impose their language and their culture as a policy in the wider quest for unification and monolingualism. At the end of the19th century the Japanese government promoted the Tokyo dialect as the standard variety; the surge of Japanese nationalism at the turn of the century reinforced the standardisation process by underestimating and stigmatising the vernaculars. Ryukuan were not saved from that. Through the central mechanisms of the state, especially through education, a negative image of the Ryukuan vernaculars was created, children were forbidden to use the vernacular and were punished when they did so. Things got worse for the vernaculars when the islands came under the control of the USA in 1972. The local culture and character became of less importance and the stressing of their Japanese identity and culture was reinforced in order to oppose the American domination. The standard Japanese language became the central key to this process and the Ryukuan vernaculars were pushed further down.

The present situation in the islands reveals a bilingual society without diglossia. In other words the vernaculars are on the edge of decline (the language of the old). Overall we see a case where language policy was entirely political and ethnicity oriented and a group of vernaculars have been suppressed and finally decimated either by their own standard variety or by the fear of foreign domination.

Conclusion

All the works presented above include a common pattern: the direct relationship of language to issues of power and politics. Language, whether in the 18th or 21st century, whether in a post colonial nation of Asia or in a western modernised state, will always be connected to much more than just linguistic factors. Living in a multiethnic and multilingual world means that groups need to struggle to establish their position in the society. The linguistic argument is the first to come forward in this struggle, either in the name of ethnic survival or in the name of social mobility; and the quest for power is always present in this fight.

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